Introduction

For this language data elicitation project, I choose to examine Hindi, a language spoken in India. Hindi belongs to the Indo-Iranian family of languages and is written from left to right using Devanagari ("Origin of Hindi," n.d.). Unlike the alphabet used for English, each Devanagari symbol has a unique pronunciation. In addition, there are no capital letters or cursive versions of Devanagari, and the characters in a word are connected by a horizontal line (Snell 2003). Linguistically, Hindi is closely related to Urdu, and they are considered dialects of the same language but with two major differences. Hindi uses the Devanagari script and is primarily spoken by Hindus in India, and Urdu uses the Arabic script and is primarily spoken by Muslims in Pakistan (O'Grady, Archibald, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2010).

The government of India recognizes 122 languages as part of its national census. Of those, Hindi is the language of the plurality. According to 2001 census data, Hindi is spoken by more than 422 million Indians, which is about 41 percent of the population (Government of India's). Hindi is recognized by the Indian Constitution as the official language of the country, although English is widespread and used officially by the government and the judiciary. Hindi is also recognized as the official language of 13 Indian states and union territories. Hindi is a majority language in nine states and a significant minority language in 18 states and union territories (Mallikarjun, 2004). However, a recent high court case in the state of Gujarat found that even though many Indians use Hindi, it is not considered the "national" language – the language of the people – because of India's multicultural and multilingual nature (Khan, 2010).

Methodology

I interviewed my Indian husband for this project since he is a native speaker of Hindi. I will refer to him as Chote throughout this paper since that is a nickname one of his older brothers

used for him. Chote was born and raised in the Indian state of Haryana, which is in the northwest part of the country. He grew up speaking Hindi and learned English in school; however, he says it wasn't until he moved to Chennai in the southeast of India that he actually used spoken and written English outside the classroom. He attributes this to the fact that the people in the south do not speak Hindi as their primary language. Instead, people from different regions of India use English to communicate with people from outside their region since English is the one language they will be most likely to have in common.

I had never heard spoken Hindi until I met my husband. Since our marriage, however, I have watched several Bollywood movies in Hindi with English subtitles. I have tried learning Devanagari, and have picked up a few Hindi words, but I am very unfamiliar with the language, its phonology, and its morphology. To learn more about these aspects of Hindi, I elicited a small sample set of data provided by my linguistics professor. The interview was recorded using my laptop's webcam with a headset, which did not provide the best sound quality. I used the Camtasia video-editing software program to enhance the volume of the original recording, but the original data was not changed.

For the phonology section of this project, we used a sample set of two dozen words that included singular nouns, adjectives, and infinitive verbs. As we recorded the data, I asked Chote to tell me the Hindi word for each English word. He only pronounced the words; he did not write them for me in either Devanagari or as a transliteration. Instead, I transcribed the words using the International Phonetic Alphabet. We used the same procedure to collect the data for the Morphology section as well. The professor provided us with a list of about a dozen phrases, including singular and plural forms and possessives. These are also included as transcriptions later in this paper.

Phonology

Phonology refers to the sounds of a language, so for this section of the project, I listened carefully to Chote's Hindi pronunciations and transcribed them using IPA symbols. The table below shows the English words and my transcription of their Hindi counterpart.

English	Transcription of Hindi	English	Transcription of Hindi
1. ear	[kɑːn]	13. good	[ɑ'tʃɑ]
2. to hear	[suː'nə]	14. bad	[bu'rə]
3. eye	[ɑːk]	15. new	[nej'ə]
4. to see	[deknek'əliej]	16. old	[purɑ'nə]
5. man	[ɑːd'mi]	17. letter	[pʌ'trə]
6. woman	[ɑ'rət]	18. book	[kɪtɑːb']
7. husband	[pə'ti]	19. school	[ʃikʃɑ'le]
8. wife	[pə'təni]	20. park	[bɑge'dʒə]
9. boy	[lər'kə]	21. to walk	[tʃɑlənɑ']
10. girl	[lər'ki]	22. to run	[dondnɑ']
11. son	[bejd'tə]	23. to play	[kejl'nə]
12. daughter	[bejd'ti]	24. movie	[tʃɑltʃɪ'trə]

My informant uses the trilled [r] like in Spanish instead of the flapped [ɾ] like many American English speakers. In this sample set, Chote often extended vowel sounds, especially the [ɑ] sound as in the words for 'eye' and 'man.' I was also able to hear the presence of diphthongs as in [bejd'tə] and [nej'ə]. For this recording, however, I think he purposefully slowed down his pronunciation of these words because when he talks to his family in India, either on the phone or through an online video chat, he speaks Hindi very, very fast.

Morphology Section

The table below shows the data collected for the morphology section of this project.

English	Transcription of Hindi	English	Transcription of Hindi
'a man'	ejk ɑdmi	'a woman'	ejk ɑrət
'the man'	vow ɑdmi	'the woman'	vow ɑrət
'two men'	dow ɑdmi	'two women'	dow ɑrət
'several men'	bows sɑri admi	'several women'	bows sɑri arətɛ
'a boy'	ejk lərkə	'a girl'	ejk lərki
'the boy'	vow lərkə	'the girl'	vow lərki
'two boys'	dow lərkej	'two girls'	dow lərkiɑ
'three boys'	tin lərkej	'four girls'	char lərkiɑ
'the man's wife'	ɑdmi ki pətʰni	'the boy's book'	lərkej ki kɪtɑ:b
'the woman's son'	ɑrət kɑ bejtɑ:	'the girl's house'	lərki kɑ gər:

I am able to identify a few morphological features of Hindi based on the small data set I collected. Since I am a native speaker of English, I compared what I heard from my informant with what I know of my own language. According to the words I recorded, Hindi does not have two allomorphs for the indefinite article "a/an" like English does. Chote used [ejk] before words starting with a consonant and words starting with a vowel. For example, he said [ejk ɑdmi] as well as [ejk lərki]. It is interesting to note that [ejk] is the same word Hindi speakers use for the number one. In English, "one" has evolved into the "a/an" allomorphs we use today. For the definite article, though, Hindi uses [vow], which is used before both vowels and consonants. This is similar to how English uses only "the" as the definite article.

Hindi does show some indication that there are masculine and feminine forms of words because in the sample data, I noticed a similarity between the words for 'boy' and 'girl.' 'Boy' is [lərkə], and 'girl' is [lərki]. It looks as if these words could be derivations of the same form for child with the final [ə] indicating a masculine child and the final [i] indicating a feminine child. The words for 'man' [ɑdmi] and 'woman' [ɑrət] do not show this distinction, so I may be incorrect in this assumption.

To create the possessive form, based on the sample data I collected, Hindi does not add an inflectional ending like English. Instead, a second word is inserted between the possessor and the item possessed. For example, the English phrase 'the girl's house' becomes [lərki kɑ gər:]. The addition of [kɑ] between the words for 'girl' [lərki] and 'house' [gər:] indicate that this house belongs to this girl. There is a difference, though, between the possessive forms used for feminine and masculine nouns. The use of the allomorphs [ki] or [kɑ] appear to be determined by the gender of the possessor. The phrase 'the man's wife' [ɑdmi ki pət^{h}ni] uses [ki] to indicate the possessor is male as does the phrase 'the boy's book' [lərkə ki kɪtɑ:b]. This leads me to believe that [kɑ] only refers to female possessors since [kɑ] was also used in the phrase 'the woman's son' [ɑrət kɑ bejtɑ:] and [ki] was used with two male possessors.

Like English, Hindi does use inflectional endings to differentiate singular and plural forms. When Rajiv said 'girls,' the [i] ending of [lərki] had an [ɑ] added as a suffix, as in [lərkiɑ]. The word 'boy' [lərkə] became [lərkej] 'boys.' Unfortunately, I do not have enough data to create a clear rule about how Hindi creates plural forms. It is possible that [ɑ] is the suffix needed to make feminine nouns ending in a vowel plural, and [ej] is the suffix needed to make masculine nouns ending in vowel plural, but in the sample data, the words for man [ɑdmi] and woman [ɑrət] remained the same when Rajiv used them in the plural. Whether he said [ejk] 'one,

a/an' man or [dow] 'two' men, the form [ɑdmi] 'man' did not change. The only way to know how many men Rajiv was talking about was to listen carefully to the determiner he used before the word [ɑdmi]. I also did not have an example of how to create the plural of a word ending in a consonant, since 'women' is the same form as 'woman.' However, Rajiv did say [ɑrətɛ] for 'women' in the phrase 'several women,' but this was the only difference between the word for singular and plural adult females. Another possibility is that Hindi uses the same form for singular or dual items and another form for items greater than two.

Conclusion

As a native speaker of English, Hindi truly sounds like a foreign language to my ears. Based on the words in this sample set, I could only pick out a few Hindi words that seem related to English. The Hindi word for 'man' [ɑdmi] sounds like "Adam," which is a man's name in English. Their word for 'two' [dow] reminds me of "duo," which means two in English. I was unable to make similar connections for any other words in the data set. For me to become a Hindi speaker, I would need formal training in this language, especially since the writing system they use is so different from the characters used to write English.

Phonologically, Hindi shares many of the same sounds that I use in English, but in the past, when I've asked my informant to pronounce individual Devanagari characters, he is able to differentiate between symbols that sound the same to me. For example, Hindi has a symbol for [kɑ] and one for [kʰɑ:]. Chote hears them as different sounds and can easily pronounce them, but they both sound like [kɑ] to me. Like English, Hindi uses diphthongs, but I was only able to hear one in the sample data. The words for 'son' [bejd′tə] and 'daughter' [bejd′ti] include the diphthong [ej]. I also enjoy listening to Hindi speakers trill the [r] in words like 'woman' [ɑrət]

and 'girl' [lərki]. I am able to reproduce that sound, even though it is not normally used in American English, since I learned how to say [r] when learning Spanish.

I would need to examine much more data in order to understand Hindi's morphological rules. From this small sample, I learned that there are allomorphs used to create the possessive based on the gender of the possessor. However, I am not certain about the rules for creating plurals in Hindi.

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